

MAY 2017

# NEW LIFE

TRUE LIFE TRANSFORMATION STORIES, MADE POSSIBLE BY YOU!

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Catfish holding his patent certificate, with (L to R) Tommy Thompson, Mission board member Harper Jones, and Patent Attorney David Westphal

## “ONLY GOD COULD DO THAT.”

*HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPED  
CATFISH FIND A NEW LIFE . . .  
AND AN ETERNAL HOME*

**ON MARCH 3,** I sat with my friend Catfish in his hospital room as the doctor told him the cancer treatments weren't working and it was time to stop. Catfish thought about that, and then he looked up at me. "Paw Paw," he said, which was his special name for me, "What do you think?" And I had to tell him that I was sorry, but I thought the doctor was right.

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## A WORD FROM TOMMY

# LOVING AS JESUS LOVED

### ***IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE***

about the Disciplers program,  
call Sammy Freeman at  
713.921.7520, ext. 207.

AND THANK YOU for all  
that you're already doing  
to support men like  
Catfish as they build  
new lives in Christ!

**IF YOU'RE A LONGTIME FRIEND** of Open Door Mission, you'll no doubt notice that we've updated our newsletter. Our hope is to give you a better inside look at exactly what your prayers and financial support are accomplishing here every day—because I mean it when I say we couldn't do this without you.

Obviously, Catfish's story is very close to my heart, and I hope it will inspire you, too. And it seems only fitting to tell his story just when we're launching a new mentoring program at Open Door Mission.

**OLD HABITS DIE HARD.** Even with everything they learn here, our graduates face some tough challenges. I think of that moment when Catfish's tools were stolen. If he hadn't had anywhere else to turn for help and advice, I don't know what would have happened.

I believe that every one of our men needs a mentor, and our new Disciplers program will help accomplish that. We'll train and equip volunteer men from our community to make a yearlong mentoring commitment covering our residents in the program and their transition into independent living.

It's a big commitment, but we're called to love as Jesus loved. That means sacrificially and consistently. And just as happened with Catfish, a mentoring experience can be transformative for us as well as our mentees.

# BY THE TIME CATFISH WAS DONE STRIPPING THAT OFFICE DOWN AND BUILDING IT BACK UP, IT SPARKLED.



## **BROUGHT IN BY ANGELS**

Catfish and I arrived at Open Door Mission at almost the same time four years ago. On my first day, he buttonholed me. “I want to tell you about my invention,” he said. I didn’t know it then, but it was the first of many times he’d seek me out to tell me all about it.

I try not to call people by nicknames, but Catfish was the exception. He had a “real name,” but Catfish is just who he was. He’d been a fixture on the streets of Houston for years, brought there by a lifestyle of hard alcoholism and drug use, until one day two angels brought him to the Mission. I don’t know any other way to say it. Two men found him under a bridge, brought him to us, and then they just disappeared.

Being at the Mission transformed Catfish in some essential ways. First, he became sober. Then, he connected to God and became zealous about his faith. The gifts of the Holy Spirit had been deeply buried, but now they were fanned into real flame. But he was still very much Catfish—a charismatic country boy with a big sense of humor, who never beat around the bush.

## **REBUILT, AND REBUILDING**

As you may know, the historic Fullerton building at the Mission dates back to 1904. That means plenty of upkeep. One day Catfish went into the office of one of our staff and said, “Your office is a dump.” She agreed with him. “I can do something about that,” he told her.

And he did. By the time Catfish was done stripping that office down and building it back up, it sparkled. Seeing the quality of his work, we invited him to tackle our rundown exercise room next. After that, he rebuilt four of the dormitories back up from the studs after we discovered some bedbugs, and there hasn’t been a bedbug in the place since. The list of his great projects on our campus goes on and on.

## **“ONLY GOD COULD DO THAT.”**

After his graduation, Catfish went to work for himself as a carpenter and handyman. I’ll never forget the day, about two years ago, when he came into my office looking dejected. He told me that someone had broken into his van and stolen every one of his tools. It’s the kind of blow that can make a man relapse.

The culprits were never caught, but it wasn’t long before a lot of Catfish’s friends heard what happened and banded together to replace all of his tools. “Only God could do that,” he told me with delight.

## HOME FOR GOOD

Catfish spent most of last summer in South Carolina working. And then I got the call. He was in a Houston hospital, and the diagnosis wasn't good: pancreatic and liver cancer.

I brought him to the Convalescent Care Center here at the Mission. For the next few months, he shuttled between the Mission and Ben Taub Hospital, where they took incredible care of him. After the decision to stop the treatment, I brought Catfish into my own house, where he could have a nice view of a beautiful waterfront from the window and a few home comforts in his final days rather than die in a hospital.

I took Friday, March 10, off from work. I spent the morning sitting with Catfish, talking to him about Jesus. He was very weak, but his eyes were aware and I knew he wasn't afraid of what was coming. We listened to some Kim Walker-Smith albums together, and as the lines of "Still Believe" played "Right now your blood takes away the curse. Right now your blood heals every disease. Right now, your blood sets the addict free," Catfish took his last breath and went home for good.

## LOVING AS JESUS LOVED

To me, there is no more important calling in this life than loving others as Jesus loved, even in the midst of our own suffering. Those two angels who brought Catfish to us, the staff and residents here, and everyone who sent up a prayer or sent in a gift for the Mission during his stay showed God's love to Catfish. He responded wholeheartedly and he repeated "Only God could do that!" And that invention he mentioned? It's been patented and exhibited for the first time last month at a hardware show in Las Vegas. Go to [www.strikerbox.com/our-story.html](http://www.strikerbox.com/our-story.html).

**CATFISH WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHOM GOD PUTS INTO YOUR LIFE. I was privileged to mentor him on the amazing journey of his last four years. I wish you could have seen his transformation through God's grace. But if you visit Open Door Mission, I can show you his legacy everywhere in the projects he completed and in my own life. Because in the end, whenever we reach out to change someone else's life, it changes ours, too.**

## NEWS & NEEDS

Thanks to the support of our CEO, Board of Directors, and of course our faithful donors, the new restrooms and showers are complete! Residents of the Fullerton dormitories and the Convalescent Care Center no longer have to leave the building for shower and restroom facilities, and this fresh, attractive restroom provides more comfortable, spacious accommodations. Thank you to everyone who helped!

### CURRENT NEEDS AT THE MISSION:

FACE TOWELS, RAZORS, DEODORANT, READING GLASSES, 45 GALLON INDUSTRIAL SIZED GARBAGE BAGS, AND POWDER FREE, L AND XL SIZED LATEX GLOVES

If you or your church can provide any of these items, please contact **Tonica Allen at 713-921-7520 ext. 244** to learn more. Or make a financial donation on the enclosed form to help with needs like these. Thank you!



Mission residents Austin and Michael with Mission Volunteer Coordinator Bill White and his wife (and beloved Mission volunteer), Janet



# THANKS TO ALL WHO RAN FOR A REASON!

We are excited to announce that the Chevron Houston Marathon was another great success for us this past January! We are deeply grateful to Chevron for selecting Open Door Mission as one of its Run for a Reason charities. We set our goal at an all-time high of \$27,000, but God had bigger plans. With the commitment of 38 amazing fundraisers and runners (including eight resident runners and one alumnus), three corporate sponsors, Allegiance Bank, and Seyfarth Shaw, LLP, we were able to raise \$45,678.03 to help men on the journey to full life recovery! Only God could do that! God is so good!

**IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP** make the next Chevron Houston Marathon an even bigger success for us, visit [www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com](http://www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com) or call **Cherri Williams at 713.259.0259** for more information.



## KITCHEN KORNER

At Open Door Mission, your support helps the men achieve physical health through good nutrition. Mission Kitchen staff like Chef Steve Love also teach employment-ready skills in the kitchen. Here's one of Chef Steve's recipes that the men at the Mission love for you to try at home.

### FRENCH BEAN SAUSAGE CASSEROLE

4 – 6 SERVINGS

- 4 premium sausages sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1 1/3 onions sliced in strips
- 1 1/3 green peppers sliced in strips
- 1 1/2 pound French green beans chopped in half
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp. onion powder
- 1 Tbsp. seasoned salt
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil or olive oil
- 1 cup shredded parmesan cheese

Sauté the sausage, onions, and green peppers in oil.

While the sausage and vegetables are cooking, place the French green beans in a boiling pot of water for 3–5 minutes, or until the beans become al dente (still firm to the bite). Drain and place them on a cooling rack.

After the beans are cool, add them to the skillet, along with the spices and mix.

Combine the mixture in a baking dish, add 1 cup of shredded parmesan cheese over the top, and place into a 350-degree oven until golden brown.



# WE LOVE OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS!

Open Door Mission wouldn't be here without our donors and volunteers!

Matt and Lori Stephens are a great example. Serving on our Young Professionals Board, they've contributed their time and leadership for many years. And as avid runners, they were a huge part of Open Door Mission's success at the Chevron Houston Marathon in January. In addition to fundraising, the couple took turns training for the half marathon with our resident running team on Saturdays throughout the fall months, rain or shine.

**PLEASE JOIN US** in thanking Matt and Lori for the blessing they are to Open Door Mission by setting an incredible example that encourages the men to set goals and persevere.



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

We would love to see you at our **ANNUAL GALA ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2017** at the Hilton Post Oak Hotel in the Galleria area. This popular event features a celebration of the year at the Mission, including presenting the Dr. Michael E. DeBakey Humanitarian Award to The Hamill Foundation, the Bob and Emilia Finnegan Founders Award to Dick Ebling, recovery testimonies of our men, performances by the ODM Ensemble and featuring a performance by Gospel Music Association Dove Award winning singer, Ellie Holcomb. To learn more or to reserve your place, call Nina Wilson Jones at 713.921.7520 ext. 223.

**JANUARY 14, 2018**, marks the next **Chevron Houston Marathon**. To be a part of the Open Door Mission team as a fundraiser or runner, visit [www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com](http://www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com)!

**GRADUATION:** On the third **Thursday of each month**, we gather at **6 p.m.** at **Our Lord and Savior Chapel on campus** to celebrate our graduates. A reception for guests follows. All friends, family members, and well-wishers are welcome to attend and hear the men's inspiring stories of transformation. For more information, call George Steed at 713.921.7520 ext. 203.

### The remaining graduation dates for 2017 are:

June 22	October 19
July 20	November 16
August 17	December 21
September 21	



Open Door Mission is a faith and evidence-based recovery and rehabilitation facility dedicated to transforming the lives of the most severely destitute, addicted, homeless, and disabled men in our community.

This newsletter is produced for the friends and supporters of Open Door Mission whose prayers and gifts help the men on their journey to a new life in Christ. Thank you for all that you do!